

Sleeping With The Grapes



An increasing number of wineries are offering accommodations for overnight guests. Here are some of the best places to dine well, relax in comfort and contemplate the vines.

BY LISA ROGAK

To gain a deeper understanding of a wine you admire, there's no substitute for visiting the winery, walking the vineyard, talking to the winemakers and the owners. It's an experience you relive, with every sip of the wine back home.

Now, you can take it a step further and truly experience the real terroir of a vineyard by spending a night, or longer, in a vineyard. The accommodations can run the gamut from luxurious villas and cottages to more rustic cabins, but the end result is the same: you come away from your stay with a deeper appreciation of the wine in your glass.

An increasing number of vineyards and wineries have started to offer accommodations on the premises in recent years, not only to increase their revenue stream but also to foster customer loyalty. In a way, they're following in the footsteps of small family farmers in the 1980s who opened their doors to guests who wanted to get a first-hand look at farm life and even pitch in with a few chores if they wanted.

Today, the same is true of wineries: you can help during harvest, offer your thoughts on a particular blend, or just luxuriate in the experience of spending the night where your favorite wine is made.

"Wineries that offer overnight accommodations provide a special attraction because they stand out from other wineries and attract more visitors,"

says Bobby Champion Jr., state coordinator for wine marketing at the Texas Department of Agriculture. "Texas is a big state, with nearly a dozen wine trails to accommodate its more than 180 wineries. It's convenient and definitely more interesting to stay overnight in a villa or bed and breakfast located at a winery." He expects the trend to continue as the popularity of wine tourism grows.

Here are seven places where you can indeed sleep with the grapes.

California

Paso Robles: Fans of Justin Winery's cult wine Isosceles, a Bordeaux-style blend, welcome the chance to stay overnight at one of four suites at the **Just Inn** (justinwine.com). Tucked among 160 acres of forest and vineyards, the inn sounds more like an 18th-century European estate than a 20-year-old inn, with tapestry-covered furnishings, feather beds and frescoed ceilings in each room, not to mention the adjacent English gardens, perfect for an afternoon stroll. The Bordeaux Suite is a 1,400-square-foot townhouse with private



Left, the Just Inn, in Paso Robles. Above, contemporary Old South charm at the 1804 Inn at Barboursville Vineyards

kitchen and dining room, and like the smaller Tuscany and Provence suites, comes equipped with marble baths, wood-burning fireplace and flat-screen TV.

Sonoma: 92 acres of vineyards surround the **Vintners Inn** (vintnersinn.com) in Santa Rosa, along with olive tree orchards, herb and vegetable gardens, and immaculately designed flower beds. A Four Diamond, 44-room luxury hotel owned by Don and Rhonda Carano of Ferrari-Carano Vineyards and Winery, the inn was recognized as a leader in the green lodging movement when California included it in its list of the 100 greenest hotels in the state. In between tastings of the winery's signature Fumé Blanc, sign up for a massage or facial at the spa or head out for a walk or jog on the two-mile path that weaves through the vineyards.

Napa: Though **La Residence:** A HALL Wine Country Getaway (laresidence.com) was only acquired by Craig and Kathryn Hall in 2006, the inn already bears their influence everywhere you look. Both Craig and Kathryn—the Ambassador to Austria under President Clinton—are avid art and antique collectors and the 26 rooms spread out between four buildings reflect this. Accommodations in the French Barn include marble bathrooms and either a private patio or balcony. The Cellar House suites feature king-sized beds, oversized bathrooms with soaking tubs, and French doors that open to private terraces overlooking the vineyard. Families lean towards the 900-square-foot Cottage Loft suite, with a six-burner Wolf range in the gourmet kitchen, washer and dryer, and private backyard. No matter which you choose, however, the vineyards are always just outside your window.

Los Olivos: **Fess Parker Wine Country Inn & Spa Resort** (fessparker.com) is a natural outgrowth of the love the late, legendary winemaker and Hollywood actor has had for Santa Barbara wine country. Parker purchased the Grand Hotel, a 21-room Victorian-style inn, and renovated and opened its doors in 1998. Though the inn has its own tasting room, guests can also sample additional wines right across the street at son Eli's Epiphany Cellars; Eli still serves as chief winemaker at his father's winery. The Inn's Ride, Wine and Dine Package features a two-hour horseback ride through the Fess Parker vineyards followed by a wine tasting and a gourmet dinner. At the Champagne

Spa, the scrub and massage combo package pairs the essence of appropriately matched wine and fruit—Syrah and black currant, Pinot Noir and fig, or Zinfandel and chocolate—into the treatment.

Texas

Bryan: The Messina Hof Winery (messinahof.com) is a favorite day-tripping Texans who want to get some serious tasting done without crossing time zones, as it's an easy 90-mile drive from Austin, Houston and Waco. But many choose to splurge on a night or two at **The Villa** with ten guestrooms, each paying homage to a different romantic figure who has a historic connection to wine. For instance, in the Lancelot Guinevere room you can sleep in a 17th-century Gothic hand-carved bed, while the Thomas Jefferson offering is appropriately masculine in tone, down to the presidential eagles carved on the headboard. Each room has a private patio, and all guests receive a winery tour and tasting, evening wine and cheese reception, and Champagne breakfast.

Colorado:

Palisade: The Victorian-style **Wine Country Inn** (coloradowinecountryinn.com) is situated in the foothills of the Western Slope of Colorado, smack in the middle of 20 acres of vineyards. The inn's rooms are within walking distance of two wineries and a short drive or bike ride away from nearly two dozen more. Other activities feature lolling on wraparound porches with rocking chairs and wicker furniture and an afternoon wine tasting. For more privacy or for extended-family reunions, book the Vintner's Guest House, with rooms and suites that can be arranged in a variety of configurations, sleeping up to 24 people.

Virginia

Charlottesville: At the **1804 Inn at Barboursville Vineyards** (barboursvillewine.net), you could easily camp out for a few days in the heart of the Charlottesville wine region without ever leaving the luxurious premises. You'd fill your time visiting the barrel room and winery museum, wandering through the vineyards, watching the grapes grow from the massive front porches that run the length of the buildings, dining at the Palladio Restaurant. With both Montpellier and Monticello a short drive away through the rolling hills, Barboursville serves as a convenient base, though some will undoubtedly have to drag themselves away from the absolute peace and quiet of the place. **W**



FOR WINERIES WITH OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATIONS IN EUROPE, CLICK ON winemag.com/sleepinggrapes